Minister Seeks Advice on School Board Funding Issues

Department of Education

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With debate getting under way on her 1999-2000 budget, Education Minister Jane Purves is already seeking advice on improving funding formulas for future years. This follows through on government's commitment to examine equitable resource-sharing help for areas with declining enrolments and a long-term funding base for school boards.

"We want to give our children every chance for success and that starts with a good education," said Ms. Purves. "When we invest in education, it's not just what we spend, but how we spend. We want advice from school boards on how to spend better."

In a letter today, the minister referred the government funding priorities to the Education Funding Review Work Group, consisting of school board and government representatives.

"The work of this group will be critical this year given the province's huge fiscal challenges," said the minister. "Whatever level of funding we are able to provide, dollars must be shared fairly and must meet our most important priorities for our children."

The minister also asked the group to examine a regulation that does not require school boards to provide bussing to students living within 3.6 kilometres of a school.

"I understand this regulation is not generally applied outside metro," said Ms. Purves. "The question is, is the 3.6 kilometre regulation still practical and reasonable given today's traffic patterns?"

The Education Funding Review Work Group has members from each of the seven school boards, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and the departments of Education, Finance, and Housing and Municipal Affairs. The group has been asked to provide an interim report to government early in the new year, so advice can be considered as early as possible in government's budget-planning process.

The minister said funding is just one area where she will seek ideas and advice. "We have to set clear priorities in education to meet the most important needs first. I will continue meeting with school boards, visiting schools and talking to parents, students and teachers in the weeks and months ahead."

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Education Minister Jane Purves is asking school boards and government officials for advice on improving funding formulas to schools.

The Education Funding Review Work Group will look at a long-term funding base for school boards plus issues such as resource-sharing, bussing and declining enrolments

Purves says she will continue to seek advice from school boards, parents and teachers to tackle the most important educational needs first.

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